

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-11. (cancelled).

12. (currently amended): A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising:

forming a contact hole in an organic insulating layer using a patterned resist layer formed over the organic insulating layer as a mask; and

ashing the patterned resist layer by a plasma treatment in the absence of fluorine and in the presence of a mixed gas containing nitrogen and hydrogen, and forming a protective film on a surface of the contact hole during said ashing, wherein the protective film is formed by reacting the organic insulating layer with the nitrogen.

13. (original): A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2 + N_2H_2$.

14. (currently amended): A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising:

forming an organic spin-on-glass (SOG) film over an interconnect layer;

forming a contact hole in the organic SOG insulating layer so as to expose the interconnect layer using a patterned resist layer formed over the organic SOG insulating layer as a mask; and

ashing the patterned resist layer by a plasma treatment in the absence of fluorine and in the presence of a mixed gas containing nitrogen and hydrogen,

and forming a protective film on a surface of the contact hole during said ashing, wherein the protective film is formed by reacting the organic SOG insulating layer with the nitrogen.

15. (original): The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein a material of the organic SOG layer is obtained by adding an alkyl group to a silicon oxide.

16. (original): A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2+N_2H_2$.

17. (original): A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the mixed gas is $O_2+N_2H_2$.